



Newham Youth Service Report

Newham Children's Services Authority Area

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Introduction

1. Newham youth service delivers youth work through a series of projects and activities based at five adult and young people's centres. It extends its provision through a series of neighbourhood projects in partnership with other providers including the voluntary sector, schools and the Connexions service. The Principal Youth Officer, who works to the Head of Newham Community Education and Youth Service (NEWCEYS), directly line manages a team responsible for a range of cross-service programmes including staff development and training, quality assurance, accredited youth achievement, youth participation, sport and fitness, outdoor education, ICT and youth arts. The full-time equivalent staffing complement is 59.6. In 2004/5' the budget was £3,547,526 and the service was able to attract additional funding of £933,519. The service reports that it reached 5,488 of the 27,013 young people aged 13-19, some 20.3% of the total.

2. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self-assessment and met officers and a cross-section of staff. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions across the borough and as part of the JAR neighbourhood study area.

Part A: Summary Report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The service self assessed its provision as being consistently good in each of the aspects covered. The inspection findings differed significantly with that assessment. The best work seen was good, with a third of all the work falling into this category, but a similar proportion was unsatisfactory or poor. Most young people with whom the service regularly works make progress, though in many cases too slowly. The quality of youth work practice overall was unsatisfactory. Common shortcomings include poor planning of individual sessions, inadequate monitoring and too low an expectation of what young people can achieve and what role the youth worker can play in helping them to fulfil their ambitions. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. The service does not measure its cost effectiveness and lacks convincing measures of its own performance. The service is inadequate and provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Strengths

- Partnerships with other services are good
- Young people are appropriately involved at a strategic level
- Accommodation and resources are very good

Areas for development

- Improve the quality of youth work practice and raise the overall standard of achievement
- Ensure the curriculum guidance to practitioners better reflects corporate and service targets
- Improve leadership and management of the service through better:
 - monitoring and evaluation of the work
 - assessment of needs
 - collection, analysis and use of data
 - deployment of staff
 - measurement of the service's cost effectiveness

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	1
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	1

The table above shows overall grades about provision. Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale: Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users: Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users: Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users: Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

Part B: The youth service's contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes

4. The service makes an adequate contribution to outcomes and in some aspects it is good. Important strategic links with other services have been established, enabling the youth service's voice to be increasingly influential. Where it is targeting work through its projects and activities, it is providing many young people with enjoyable opportunities to develop personal qualities, self-esteem and skills. Young people are highly involved in shaping the agenda for the service through youth forums and the youth parliament. Outreach work helps to reduce anti-social behaviour by providing alternative activities. All youth centres include effective health-related activities within their programmes. There are significant projects underway on the promotion of sport within the council's sports strategy, although the youth service programme overall is not as well matched to the new council's priorities as it needs to be, nor is the work delivered as effectively as it could or should be. There is an established culture of safeguarding young people.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice

5. The standard of young people's achievement is adequate. There is a wide range of accredited opportunities. Most young people with whom the service has been working on a sustained basis make progress, though in many cases too slowly. Some examples of high achievement were observed during the inspection. At the Forest Gate Centre, a group of young people were working on the latest edition of the members' Newsletter; they produced a high quality product that provided thoughtful insights into important issues to the group, including drugs awareness and the importance of being healthy. More frequently, activities did not challenge or engage young people. At one project, the activities provided were mundane and the young women were disinterested and produced work of poor quality. Some left the session early.

6. Approximately one-third of young people observed were making good progress in personal and social development and in acquiring skills; a similar number were not. At the Techshop bike project, Youth Achievement Award portfolios were used imaginatively to accredit learning. There was clear evidence of progress as well as a strong sense of teamwork. One young man was developing the project's website as part of his programme and making useful additions to it. This work contrasted with the unsatisfactory progress made in other sessions, which consisted of little more than supervised recreational activity with scant evidence of a planned programme of work.

7. On nearly all occasions, young people behaved responsibly towards one another. In one outstanding session at the Youth Parliament, young people ran and delivered the session impressively. Two of the young people scripted and delivered a presentation to be given in a school assembly. The rest of the group critically evaluated it in terms of both content and impact. All contributed perceptively and made helpful suggestions, while recognising the very high standard of the draft script and the way it was presented.

8. Overall, the quality of the youth work practice is unsatisfactory. There is a strong link between the quality of practice and young people's achievement. Where there is effective practice, strategies to engage with young people are varied and workers show a real commitment to wanting to help them. These workers have skill, patience and the ability to develop and sustain good relations. In over a third of the work seen, including one very good outreach project, these qualities were observed, while in nearly the same proportion they were largely absent.

9. In the least successful sessions, workers are too passive. Some have too low an expectation of what the young people can achieve for themselves. Planning of work in relation to the individual needs of young people is superficial with too many tasks planned in relation to perceived group needs rather than those of the

individuals that make up the group. Some workers had not thought through fully the question of who they are working with and why. Sometimes poor time management left important work uncompleted.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. The quality of the curriculum is adequate and the resources to deliver it are good. There is a broad range of provision in a variety of different settings. However, there is a mismatch between the aims and priorities of the council and the provision made by the youth service. The council in its JAR self assessment states that its highest priorities include crime reduction, drugs awareness, and the reduction of teenage pregnancies, as well as raising the low aspirations of white young people. While the youth service has activities that contribute to most of these goals, they are not as well represented as they need to be. Although some work focuses on particular target groups, some of the generic youth work is unchallenging.

11. Management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. It is unclear whether the overall responsibility for the curriculum lies with the Principal Youth Officer or the Strategic Policy Officer. Some provision, especially at project level, appears to be an ad hoc response to events rather than a disciplined assessment of need. While the curriculum process is set out in a policy document, this is not well understood by some managers and workers. These constraints leave workers uncertain in some contexts about how they should operate.

12. Adopting the five Every Child Matters outcomes for curriculum planning represents a useful starting point, but the distinctive contribution of the youth service to that agenda is still to be articulated. Currently, too much provision is undertaken to meet the needs of partners' priorities rather than those of the youth service. In some of the school-based work there is a lack of formal reporting arrangements and accountability between the school and the youth centre. Similarly, there are no formal protocols on partnership roles and responsibilities. Their absence significantly weakens understanding among partners of the youth work contribution to pupils' achievement and the school curriculum.

13. Over two-thirds of the part time staff do not hold the part-time youth work qualification, although one third have been locally accredited. This is having an adverse impact on the quality of youth work practice. The service is aware of the shortcoming and is making attempts to address it. Staff deployment is often not well judged. On one occasion, there were five staff and just seven young people. In some sessions, staff were unclear of their roles or expected contributions.

14. The resources to deliver the curriculum are very good. All the accommodation visited was appropriate, well located and of a very high standard. There is a good spread of venues across the Borough providing a welcoming environment for young people. The venues are well resourced and, where there is specialist equipment, competent and qualified staff are employed to maximise the use of it. Good progress is being made towards meeting requirements in respect

of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001. The authority provides workers and young people with a healthy and safe working environment.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Leadership and management of the service are inadequate. The council provides good support to it in most important respects and there is, for example, support for the development plan and sufficient resources. Whilst there is a clear commitment to developing youth provision to meet the area's needs, the precise contribution of the youth service to the overall priorities of the council and its partners, as defined in the Children and Young People's Plan, needs greater clarity. Whilst provision is regularly reappraised, this process has not always led to changes to the programme of work where they are most needed.

16. The promotion of equality, inclusiveness and diversity is satisfactory and appropriate policies are in place. The service provides projects for groups of young people with moderate learning difficulties, those who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, and for young parents and specific minority ethnic groups, although a higher priority needs to be given to some of this work than is currently the case. There is still more work to be done to attract white young people, as well as those from some minority ethnic groups.

17. Young people are highly involved in youth forums and the Youth Parliament. Youth workers help to develop young people's awareness of political structures and processes and to negotiate change. They make valued contributions on interview panels for youth service, Connexions and council appointments. Most young people spoken with during the inspection rightly feel that their voice is heard at a strategic level.

18. Partnership working is undertaken with purpose and enthusiasm. However, the extent to which the youth services ambitions are based on a shared understanding of local needs varies. While the need to work with particular groups of young people is widely recognised, not all partners fully understand their contribution to the youth service remit.

19. The failure to improve the assessment of need and the identification of the priority groups are serious shortcomings. Neither problem is helped by overly complex management arrangements leaving lines of accountability far from clear. The need to involve young people more effectively in the development of projects at the local level and in quality assurance is acknowledged in the self assessment. While the morale of staff is generally good, day to day management of several projects is unsatisfactory.

20. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. Some rudimentary quality assurance arrangements are in place, but there is insufficient evidence of their impact to improve delivery. The service acknowledges that its management information system is unable to measure performance accurately and progress against standards or targets. The manual system makes it more difficult to

undertake accurate benchmarking with London or national services. This system is shortly to be replaced with an IT-based system. However, for this inspection the service had difficulty in providing agreed and reliable data on the numbers and qualifications staff, its levels of reach and participation rates, and its progress in meeting national benchmarks.

21. Given these problems, it is not surprising that the service does not have in place robust measures of its cost effectiveness or the impact of its work.